United Nations E/CN.6/2011/NGO/46

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 December 2010

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fifth session
22 February-4 March 2011
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by International Council of Women, International Health Awareness Network, Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Medical Women's International Association, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, National Council of Women of the United States, Soroptimist International, and World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

10-67471 (E) 301210

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Statement*

1. We are committed to promoting the theme of this year's Commission on the Status of Women: "Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work".

2. The Beijing Platform of Action highlighted a roster of issues integral to women's lives and put women at the forefront of the public policy agenda. One of the most crucial issues is that of women and girls' education. This involves providing women with equal opportunities, and preparing them early on to enter different branches of universities and workplaces, including technological and scientific fields.

3. The gender gap worldwide is still tremendous, and it exists especially in the arena of technology and science, where women are represented in a very small minority. Unequal access to technology and science curricula from the early years of a child's life creates an ongoing disadvantage. Very little is done to interest girls in technology and science; research has proved that girls are often discouraged by teachers, male and female alike, from entering these fields, be it consciously or subconsciously. Yet this is one of the fastest growing job markets for the foreseeable future.

4. We, as women, must look for technologies that make our future a sustainable one. We must look to achieve zero or near-zero emissions while producing enough energy to sustain the world's growing population. Women must be given an equal opportunity to pursue these fields. We urge all Governments to promote the development of science and technology and to provide an equal opportunity for girls and women to participate and excel in this arena. An example is how cell phones are now quite commonplace even in remote parts of Africa, operable by hand crank if there is no viable source of electricity. Because women have now gained access to this technology in many rural areas of developing countries, the women are able to communicate and determine current market value, then bring their crops to market in time to sell them at the best price. According to *The Economist* Magazine, this technology is playing a key role in rural women's future economic security.

5. All children should be exposed to these fields at a very young age, but since boys and men are exposed to these fields at a greater rate early on, girls and women are at a large disadvantage, a gap which only grows wider the older they get.

6. Women who are educated in the fields of science and technology can help make progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, either through research or by furthering education. Women must be encouraged from early on in educational settings that these fields are successful, viable career paths to consider.

7. In order to further the Millennium Development Goals, we urge all Governments to focus on the education of rural women and women in urban poverty.

* Issued without formal editing.